

PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

10th November 2010

Present: Councillor ML Evans (Chair)
Ms C Gwyther, Mrs G Hayward, Mrs F Lanc, Messrs JS Allen-Mirehouse, JA Brinsden, D Ellis, HM George, RN Hancock, SL Hancock, R Howells, M James, RM Lewis, PJ Morgan, WL Raymond, EA Sangster and M Williams..

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 11.00am – 12.15pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor RR Evans,

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28th July 2010 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th July 2010 be confirmed and signed.

3. Matters arising

(a) Car parking Charges (Minute 3(a))

It was noted that proposals would be brought to the Authority in the new year with a view to the new arrangements being in place before the season began.

NOTED.

(b) Bluestone Partnership Working (Minute 3(e))

A Member asked whether there were any specific arrangements in place for the use of the National Park brand in the marketing literature of individual companies, which would hopefully in turn encourage visitors to the National Park. The Chief Executive replied that there were no specific arrangements, but the Authority had participated in a recent well attended Seminar organised by Pembrokeshire Tourism and had facilitated a workshop on branding which encouraged participants to use the National Park in its marketing. However use by private companies of the Authority's logo would constitute an endorsement of their product and this was not considered to be appropriate.

NOTED.

(c) Oriel y Parc (Minute 7)

The question was asked what restrictions had been placed on the use of Oriel y Parc by the Wales European Funding Office (WEFO). The Chief Executive replied that these related to targets for numbers of people to be employed as well as to the level of retail activity that could take place in the building, and that the conditions lasted until 2013/14. WEFO had been consulted prior to taking action, and had confirmed that it was acceptable.



NOTED.

4. Continuous Improvement Group – report of meeting

The report of the meeting of the Continuous Improvement Group held on 29th September 2010 was presented to Members for consideration.

With regard to the Committee Structure Review, the future composition of the Continuous Improvement Group was questioned, and the Chairman confirmed that ad hoc Members could continue to be invited to attend, depending on the items under consideration.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Continuous Improvement Group held on 29th September 2010 be received.

5. Performance Report for the Second Quarter of the Year 2010/11

The report of the Head of Business Management began by summarising progress towards each of the key actions set out in the Corporate Plan, and it was noted that the table this month included an additional column to show progress or otherwise from the previous quarter. As this was a mid-year report, most items were in progress, but that the status of two actions had improved since the previous quarter and two had dropped behind schedule. With regard to these latter, unfortunately the grant application for the Carew reception centre had been refused, and an update on this would be provided at a future meeting of the Authority. The other action related to the launch of the redesigned web site, and the Head of Business Management was pleased to report that this had in fact been launched earlier in the week.

With regard to Development Management, the statistics set out in the report showed that for the quarter April to June, 77% of applications overall had been determined within 8 weeks, against the all Wales average of 72%. The backlog for the quarter ending in June was the lowest of all planning authorities, and this had been reduced still further by the end of September. There had been a significant increase in applications in July and August as well as a significant appeal hearing, which had led to an increase in workload and it was warned that this might lead to a reduction in performance during the next quarter. It was noted at the meeting that the joint Value for Money study had still not been released, and an update would be given at the National Park Authority meeting in December.

The report went on to update the Committee on the work being undertaken throughout the Authority under the headings of Conservation, Access and Recreation, Climate Change and Carbon Reduction, Corporate Communications, the Centres, Corporate Services and the Sustainable Development Fund. Also set out in the report was progress in relation to the targets set out in the Welsh Assembly Government's Strategic Grant Letter, as well as listing the top third of the risk register. With regard to joint working, the Chief Executive noted that this was something that the Authority had been engaged in for many years and as such, most of the easy schemes were already underway; however officers would continue to actively pursue all options to work jointly with all its partners.



Finally the report listed other performance indicators that were reported to the Committee. With regard to the figure for sickness absence, it was questioned whether this was likely to exceed the target, given that the winter, with its attendant 'flu outbreaks, was upon us. The Head of Business Management replied that he expected the figure to be on target, barring a major 'flu epidemic, as sickness absences were fairly constant over the year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Performance Report for the second quarter of the year 2010/11 be approved.

6. Employee Performance Management

The Personnel Manager began by explaining the principle of the 'golden thread' of performance management, by which the efforts of individuals and teams within an organisation were linked to the organisational outcomes. The objectives would be set by Members in the forthcoming three year strategy for the Authority and employees needed to become engaged in delivering those objectives.

She went on to explain that the Authority had had a staff appraisal/performance review process in place for many years, and this needed to be integrated into a strategic framework if it was to be more effective at supporting improved performance. It was intended that the Authority's corporate objectives would be placed on the performance review form, and employees would then link their personal targets and development needs back to the corporate objectives, and a draft of the appropriate form was appended to her report.

Therefore in order to achieve more effective employee performance management within the Authority, it was proposed to undertake the following action:

- a) develop a performance management framework by January 2011 (a draft framework was appended to the report).
- b) establish a plan for developing the skills needed by June 2011.
- c) amend the paperwork for the employee performance review process to build in direct reference to the Authority's objectives each year by January 2011.

Members questioned whether staff had been consulted on the proposed changes, and the Personnel Manager replied that staff had been involved in reviewing the appraisal scheme a number of times over the years, and the current proposals would help to make it clearer whether targets were being met.

It was **RESOLVED** that the above actions be endorsed.

7. Budget Performance Report to September 2010

The budget performance report set out the detailed net revenue budget for the three months to September 2010, when the Authority's net revenue expenditure was £2,913k, £418k under the profiled budget. The main reasons for the underspend of actual expenditure against budget was as a result of



underspends in a number of Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) projects as well as grants from that fund being carried forward from 2009/10; various grants received in advance of expenditure; and the profiling of the budget against the actual expenditure, with details of each service department being given in the report. Also provided was forecast revenue position for the year end, and this suggested a surplus of £63k versus the original budget of £18k and the factors contributing to this were set out.

The report went on to outline the capital budget, with the revised capital spend of £261,504 likely to be higher than the original budget of £260,000 with the funding coming from Cadw (£50,000), Welsh Assembly Government (£167,777) and Capital Receipts (£43,727). It was noted that a match funding bid to enhance the Carew Castle Development project was recently rejected by the Aggregates Levy Fund, however work would continue to access Convergence Program funds and develop the site, although this would require significant match funding.

Finally the report set out the Authority's general and earmarked reserves and its capital receipts, and it was noted that while these were relatively high, they would help combat the inevitable cut in the NPA grant for 2011/12 and beyond. However Members were assured that a reduction in funding would be matched by a reduction in the Authority's cost base and that the reserves would merely aid the transition process.

It was **RESOLVED** that the budgetary performance report for the 6 months ended 30th September 2010 be endorsed.

8. Three Parks Value for Money Study into the Planning Service

The Chief Executive reported that this report had been commissioned as a result of the Wales Audit Office report, to provide better information on value for money within the service. It had been hoped it would be finalised by the summer, but it had yet to be released. It was therefore expected that it would be reported to the meeting of the National Park Authority on 8th December.

NOTED.

9. Presentation on the work of Support Services

The Head of Business Management explained that support services consisted principally of the IT, Personnel, Projects, Reception, Legal and Performance Management teams of the Authority in addition to the Directors of Conservation and Recreation/Marketing and that the costs of these services were recharged to other teams according to the CIPFA Code of Good Practice 2010/11. Graphs showed that Support Services made up about 23% of the Authority's expenditure and that staffing and costs were broadly in line with those in the other National Parks in England and Wales. The presentation continued with an outline of the main duties undertaken by the teams.

Thanking officers for their presentation, Members noted that the basic question in relation to support services was whether they could be done better and cheaper through alternative means. The Chief Executive replied that all costs



were being looked at carefully but that in some cases changes to service delivery would have a long payback, making it uneconomic. Members agreed that it was often possible to save money at vast expense.

NOTED.

